



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE "GENOVEVA" THEME

### WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HEBBEL'S TREATMENT

When and where the real Genoveva theme originated has been the subject of lively discussion. For our present purposes we need not go into that at length; for, while reduced to its simplest elements the theme reaches back to the very beginnings of community life, a review of the literary reactions evoked by it since it was first coupled with the name of Genoveva will suffice for our study.

But we cannot pass the matter by in such summary fashion when the question is asked, "What is the Genoveva theme?" Bruno Golz<sup>1</sup> speaks of it as the "Leiden einer unschuldigen Frau" and cites parallels in the exposure and rescue of innocent women in the Thidreksage and elsewhere. Richard Meszlény<sup>2</sup> scores Golz for this superficial view, maintaining that the theme is the disloyalty of the trusted man toward the husband who has left property and wife in his hands. In this, Meszlény is unfair toward Golz. Both critics are right, only they are approaching the subject from different standpoints. In fact, it is of great importance that we recognize from the outset that the theme contains two distinct elements, and that this accounts for the very different treatments it has received. Golz, in writing a history of Genoveva in German literature, naturally stresses that part of the theme which had attracted almost all of those who handled the subject. Meszlény, having Hebbel's Genoveva in mind, lays emphasis on the other side.

According to Seuffert,<sup>3</sup> who seems to know more about the legendary Genoveva than anyone else, the legend was first written somewhere between 1325 and 1425 by a monk of Laach. On a copy of this MS Marquard Freher seems to have founded his Latin version of 1613. This work contains practically all the characters found in the later redactions, with the same names. Better known than Freher's legend, however, was that of the French Jesuit, René de

<sup>1</sup> *Pfalzgräfin Genoveva in der deutschen Dichtung*, Leipzig, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> "Friedrich Hebbel's Genoveva," *Hebbel Forschungen*, Nr. IV, Berlin, 1910.

<sup>3</sup> *Die Legende von der Pfalzgräfin Genovefa*, Würzburg, 1877.

Cerisiers, which appeared in 1640. Here are to be found many points that continue on down through Hebbel's drama: the reluctance of Genoveva to marry; Golo's first declaration of love before Genoveva's portrait; Golo's nurse as an accomplice; Genoveva bears a son in prison and calls him Benoni (in later German versions translated to *Schmerzenreich*); Siegfried, wounded, has to stop in Strassburg, where Golo visits him and where they both visit the witch, sister of Golo's nurse; the ghost of Drago appears—to Siegfried, however, etc.

Cerisiers formed the basis of the German *Volksbuch* which was, of course, the source of information for the important Genoveva literature of the next two centuries: the works of Müller, Raupach, Tieck, and Hebbel.

As early as 1597 there is proof of the dramatization of the Genoveva theme. From that time to the middle of the eighteenth century we find numberless notices of the presentation of the material all over Germany in various forms—in Italian, in German, and in Latin. Some were music dramas. Most of them were presented by Jesuits, who from Cerisiers on showed a predilection for the subject. A glance at the titles of these school dramas as they are preserved to us will show what attracted playwrights and audiences of the seventeenth century: *Innocence Rewarded*, *Suffering Innocence Triumphant*, etc.

It can easily be imagined, however, that by the time of the Sturm und Drang this phase of the subject ceased to be that which appealed to writers most. Hence we find an improvement in the conception and treatment of the material. In fact with Maler Müller's *Golo und Genoveva* we may say that the first literary treatment of the subject appeared. For this reason, and because of Hebbel's attitude toward Müller's conception, we may look at this play rather carefully.

Like Hebbel, Müller carried the theme of Genoveva in his mind for some time before writing his drama; also like Hebbel, he found that the work when completed did not meet with the approval of those who read it—for very different reasons, to be sure. Ballads, an isolated scene of the drama, and other evidences of his interest in Genoveva are to be found among his early writings. Written in 1775–81, the play was not published until 1811. Tieck saw the MS in 1797, and he it was who prepared it for publication.

It is a typical Sturm und Drang piece, both in treatment and in form. To a marked degree it shows the influence of *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther*:<sup>1</sup> note the fact that it is a Ritterdrama; compare Mathilde and Adelheid; and Golo is a Werther to all intents and purposes, while Genoveva and Siegfried are counterparts of Charlotte and her husband.

The following brief summary of the action may be a help toward understanding Müller's contribution to the theme and form a basis for further discussion. Act I is taken up with Siegfried's departure for the war. Genoveva begs to go along, but is refused. The real farewell, so vividly portrayed by Hebbel, is not represented on the stage. The situation is also obscured by numerous minor characters, and their relations rather obtrude on our attention. Golo, as soon as he knows he is in control, begins to be fired with love for Genoveva, wishes he might flee, but yet will not. The event of the portrait is changed: Genoveva, wishing to cheer Golo up, for whom she genuinely sympathizes in what she takes to be melancholy at being left behind, shows him a work of art—the picture of three saints. Golo is not enthusiastic, the maids rally him on his lack of appreciation, and attribute it to the fact that he thinks he can paint better. Golo replies by fetching a mirror and placing it before Genoveva and Julie, muttering a vague something about his love. Genoveva suspects nothing.

Act II is marked by the arrival at Pfälzel of the moving spirit of the play: Mathilde. She has come at Genoveva's invitation, which is a dramatic point, since she is to be Genoveva's undoing. She is the patroness of Golo, who, as it develops at the end of Act IV, is her illegitimate son. She is a *Machtweib*, a Lady Macbeth, a Marwood, an Adelheid. Ambitious for her son, she humors him, bullies him, encourages him, tries to arouse him from his stupor of love. Finding this impossible, she then tries to satisfy his desire. Thus that course of intrigue is entered on, which soon admits of no possibility but to continue it to the fatal conclusion. As a woman who is beautiful, magnetic, bringing everyone under her sway, and yet one who scruples at nothing to reach her end, Mathilde is well portrayed.

<sup>1</sup> The author intended to dedicate it to Goethe. The friendship between himself and Goethe was broken off, however, before the publication of the play.

The events of Act III are as follows: Golo declares his love in the garden and is rejected. Genoveva's cry for help is heard by Dragones, who runs to the spot, only to be wounded by Golo, who escapes. Others rush up and fall on Dragones. Genoveva faints. Mathilde starts the suspicion of intrigue between Genoveva and Dragones. These two are put in custody. Later when Genoveva has rejected shameful proposals from Mathilde in Golo's behalf, Genoveva is put in a dungeon, and Dragones is poisoned (dying on the stage). Mathilde used one of her lovers to poison Dragones.

In Act IV Siegfried is informed of the state of things. A servant of Mathilde procures the count's orders to kill Genoveva. Golo tries to induce Genoveva to flee with him. In vain.<sup>1</sup> The matter of Genoveva's guilt is submitted to trial by combat; Genoveva's champion falls before Golo (on the stage) and Mathilde urges Golo to hurry up the killing of Genoveva. She is turned over to two murderous fellows, from whom the old gardener rescues her, the murderers giving her up on the condition that she go away. In remorseful fury Golo would assassinate Siegfried whose face is a constant reminder of his evil deed. Mathilde stops him in this mad plan only to be stabbed herself. She tells him she is his mother. Golo flees, and Mathilde finds it expedient to leave Pfälzel.

In Act V<sup>2</sup> the action takes place years later. Siegfried is given a letter which Genoveva had written when she received her condemnation. A hunt is ordered. Golo, driven desperate by remorse, goes defiantly to the hunt. It is a double chase. Some hunt the game, others Golo. Genoveva and Schmerzenreich are found; Golo gives himself up. But he dies like a man. Genoveva and Siegfried return to a happy married life.

It will be seen from this outline that Müller's work is at least characterized by some marked innovations. He took the material, used what he liked, followed now the German, now the Dutch tradition, and supplied some inventions of his own. One inestimable contribution of Müller is the changing of Genoveva from a saint to a pure woman.<sup>3</sup> The Genoveva of the saga tried to dissuade Golo

<sup>1</sup> This scene, which Müller had already treated in ballad, is here better presented. There Genoveva had to buy the life of her child with a kiss. Here Golo puts the child back in her arms on seeing her despair.

<sup>2</sup> In the course of this act Mathilde meets a terrible end, dying at the hands of a betrayed lover, the same who poisoned Dragones.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Seuffert, p. 166.

from his evil desires. Müller's Genoveva cannot bear the sight of Golo when she at last learns his intent. On the whole, however, this character has not been successful in any writer's hands.

The main departure Müller made from the saga was in the character of Mathilde. The nurse of Golo has here become his mother, and a woman of rank and power. No one can deny that Mathilde is a dramatic figure. She is the favorite character of the author. Her defiance of all law makes her the true *Stürmer und Dränger*. Meszlény, who rolls strange metaphors as a sweet morsel under his tongue, calls her a comet-like parabola. But Müller makes a mistake in emphasizing this character, just as Goethe does with Adelheid. The result is that she overshadows, nay, even effaces Golo, who, as Hebbel insisted and Tieck endeavored to show, is the real tragic character. Müller must have felt this too, though not in time. Note that when Mathilde passes out of the action, Golo becomes another man. He, like Hebbel's Golo, feels that justice must be dealt out to him, and longs for it, and goes out to meet his fate, utterly indifferent whether he lives or dies. After he has given himself up, his accusers would cut him down like a beast, but he overcomes them and could kill them. Instead he lets them kill him.

Just before his death Golo utters a sentiment that reminds one strongly of Hebbel: "*Ihr Elenden,*" he says to his executioners, "*die nicht fühlen, wie jammervoll dem Unglücklichen ist! Ihr schmähet mich, schaut auf mein Verbrechen, aber nicht auf das Schicksal, das mich bis dahin trieb.*" This is the view of the *Stürmer und Dränger*. A man must act in accordance with the nature God gave him. Werther could not help loving Charlotte, and could not help killing himself, because he could not otherwise keep away from her. Similarly Judith could not keep from loving Holofernes. In this view Hebbel is in accord with the *Stürmer und Dränger*.

Müller lets the strings go here and there. The construction is loose, filled with minor characters, and marred by promises that remain unfulfilled. Beside Hebbel's compact piece, Müller's shows up badly. Note the space wasted in getting under way. The first act is too circumstantial, and the whole treatment is long drawn out—a fault that seems inherent in the *Genovevastoff*, since everyone who handled it found difficulty in bringing it within proper

bounds. But Müller's drama cannot be said to be dull reading. It has vigor and is not wanting in picturesque qualities. The song, "Mein Grab sei unter Weiden, Am stillen dunkeln Bach!" has a weird effect on the reader as the plot advances.

It was this song that haunted Tieck after the rest of the play had paled in his memory. It will be remembered that Tieck read the almost illegible MS of Müller's play in 1797. The next year he read the *Volksbuch*, and in 1799 he finished his own *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva*. Apropos of the *Volksbuch* and the impression it made on him when he first read it, he afterward said:

Ich las es ohne Absicht in einer müssigen Stunde, und meine Imagination ward vorzüglich von der Schilderung der Einsamkeit, den Leiden der Frau in dieser und dem wundersamen Zusammentreffen mit dem Gemahl in Bewegung gesetzt; der lieblich fromme und schlichte Ton des Büchelchens rührte mich ebenfalls, und allgemach verknüpften sich Erinnerungen, Vorsätze und poetische Stimmungen mit diesem Märchen. Der schöne Gedanke des wiederholten Liedes in Müllers 'Genoveva' fiel mir wieder bei; aber so sehr ich auch mein Gedächtnis quälte, so konnte ich mich durchaus nicht erinnern, ob es jenes Gemälde der Einsamkeit, das mich in der Legende vorzüglich angezogen, angebracht, oder wie er das Wiederfinden des Grafen, das Verhältnis zum Golo behandelt hatte.<sup>1</sup>

There is little reason to doubt the sincerity of this statement, or to suppose that Tieck was very much influenced by the play of Müller. The foregoing quotation is interesting, however, as showing Tieck's attitude toward this theme. If Müller in his drama appears as the true Stürmer und Dränger, the author of *Das Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva* is in every sense of the term an exponent of Romanticism. It has been pointed out that Müller wrote before the Middle Ages were well known, and that his *Genoveva* lacks the proper milieu. Tieck lived in the period when the Middle Ages were all-absorbing study and his *Genoveva* is all milieu. No one would claim for Tieck the name of dramatist. Despite the fact that he regarded his *Genoveva* as his most important work, its chief merit, like that of all his writings, is the interpretation of a past age to his own. No author's treatment of the *Genoveva* theme was so popular as Tieck's, in its day.

We will not stop to consider Tieck's many additions and inventions, by which he advances the dramatic conception not at all. Such scenes as those in the Saracen camp have nothing to do with

<sup>1</sup> *Schriften*, I, 27.

the Genoveva theme. No more has that of the two shepherds playing and singing to pass away the time. If we wish to get at Tieck's treatment of our theme we had best consider his characters.

First of all Genoveva. We have seen that Müller developed the conception of this character from that of the saint to that of the woman. Tieck, however, goes backward. His is a history of *Saint* Genoveva. He goes to much pains to show her piety. She was loath to leave the monastery. She finds pleasure in long talks with the chaplain, and is studious of the lives of the saints. She has visions of Christ and heaven. But she is not consistently drawn. Her vision of Christ becomes later identified with Golo. She indeed feels, as to be sure the young wife of an old count might feel, a secret inclination for this dashing, bright-eyed, talented knight. As a result of this human trait we might expect a mental conflict. But saints do not have such disturbances, and Genoveva remains the saint.<sup>1</sup> Tieck here gives rise to expectations he does not satisfy: one might suppose that he was about to make Genoveva a dramatic character. Such is not the case, and she remains in Tieck's hands what she was in the hand of all the rest—impossible dramatically.

In Golo, Tieck has succeeded better. He takes care to get the reader's approval of this character in the beginning. Manly beauty, bravery, big-heartedness, fidelity—these qualities are shown us in charming fashion. He is himself not aware of his passion for Genoveva at first. Like Müller's Golo, he finds himself standing near her door without knowing why he is there. He even wishes to console Genoveva. Note another trait which is due to Tieck's invention. Golo would have Genoveva's love, but when Gertrud suggests subtle means of approaching his lady, he refuses to go as a thief in the night.<sup>2</sup> He longs for Genoveva, but his longing is at first honorable—as a true man for a true woman, not as a rogue for another man's wife.<sup>3</sup> As the play advances, this nobler feeling is beaten down by the blind desire for the object of his love. Here we have a truly dramatic conflict which reminds us of Hebbel. Müller, we have seen, failed sadly at this point, though his Golo develops better dramatic

<sup>1</sup> She leaves Golo's declaration of love to go study the Bible with Drago.

<sup>2</sup> So did Müller's Golo until assured Genoveva wanted him.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. such remarks as: "Ist Liebe ein Verbrechen wenn sie keusch bleibt?"; "Sagt ihr hasst mich nicht und all mein Sinnen ist beruhigt."



qualities toward the end. But the end of Golo's career is not the dramatic point; it is where he enters the lane that has no turning.

Despite all Tieck's efforts, however, his Golo is not a strong character. Tieck had stressed his good characteristics too strongly to make a thorough villain of him. He tries to be hard with Genoveva in her need in prison, but relents. And even in his worst despair and fury he sets up two peasant lovers with a comfortable living. He is a confirmed sentimentalist at heart—just such a mediaeval gallant as a Romanticist would portray.

Gertrud needs but a word. Tieck seems to have profited by Müller's mistake in making Mathilde so prominent. Beside the latter, Gertrud is indeed a pale figure. She is a gossiping old woman, who loves Golo, but loves the countess also. She saw no special wrong in encouraging Golo in his love for Genoveva. The two are young and belong to one another, whereas the count is old and "blöden Sinnes." She had no idea that Genoveva could resist Golo's charms and that the result would be more than a quiet little intrigue. She never ceased to be astonished at the proportions the tragedy took. She was in no sense a friend to drastic measures.

Drago is represented as a thoroughly pious, rather bookish person.<sup>1</sup> His being accused of intrigue with Genoveva is too absurd. Also the manner of surprising the two together is poorly motivated, whereas in Müller and Hebbel it is well done.

Tieck followed the *Volksbuch* closely, adding things, but changing little. The episodes of the *Volksbuch* become scenes in the same order in Tieck's drama. Thus a loose dramatical construction was inevitable. He even resorts to the epic form (in the monologues of St. Boniface) when he finds the dramatic too cumbersome. It is evident then that a more dramatic conception of the material is not what Tieck is to be commended for. What was it then? We have spoken of the matter of milieu; Tieck should be credited with some success in getting into the spirit of the age he portrayed, and of reproducing that spirit. But he did more. He lent a finer tone to the moral problem, put that problem on a higher plane. That he could not debate that question successfully in his play lay as much in the fact that he was no philosopher as in deficiencies as a dramatist.

<sup>1</sup> Note the Romantic trait that a cook should be a seeker after knowledge.

Tieck affected mysticism and mediaeval religious feeling, rather than felt them. He was fond of Jacob Boehme's writings, but more for the sentiment than for the real results of the mystic's thought. At least, Tieck shows no evidence of having traced out the problem of good and evil to its source. Hence his tragedy fails to convince us that it might not have happened.

We have now to turn to a dramatist who did attempt this problem.

Müller ignored the religious quality of the legend. Tieck reinvested the theme with this quality, whether superficially or not we shall not stop here to discuss. Hebbel in his turn has written a drama that is thoroughly imbued with religion. This is to be seen throughout: from the scene where Golo throws the responsibility of his future actions on God by climbing the tower, to where Genoveva teaches Siegfried the Christian spirit of forgiveness in the pater-noster.<sup>1</sup> Over against this spirit of religion, as representing the whole, we have the rebellion of Golo, his sophistry, his struggle, as representing the individual. Hebbel's dualism is clear enough here to need no elaboration.

Around the struggle of Golo the plot of the whole drama is woven. The analysis of this character is the chief thing, and monologues and asides are not spared to set forth the workings of Golo's soul. Hebbel has been criticized for this: it has been said that the analysis is cold-blooded; that Golo is not natural; that his actions are too clearly in accordance with the law which Hebbel is here demonstrating, etc. These objections are not without basis. Golo was too vividly in Hebbel's mind for him to have written otherwise. And it would seem that if Hebbel has to answer the charge of being subjective anywhere it is in his *Genoveva*. One editor has said that the speeches of Golo are one confiteor after the other and that his asides and monologues are equivalent to entries in Hebbel's diaries.<sup>2</sup> To understand this we must remember Hebbel's state of mind at the period of the writing of *Genoveva*. In the summer of 1840 Elise, whose approaching confinement was a double bond between him and her, was away from Hamburg. At the same time he felt strongly attracted to Emma Schröder. "Wie ein Tropfen Kühlung für unendliche Glut, wie ein Trunk, der alle Sinne schwellt, erschien ihm das

<sup>1</sup> *Nachspiel*, pp. 279 f.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Specht, *Hebbel's Werke*, II, 79.

Verhältnis zu Emma," says Werner.<sup>1</sup> Hebbel was torn between duty and desire, and his conflict is reflected in Golo's.

Furthermore, in Genoveva we have both objects of his love at this time. The attractive, beautiful Genoveva is Emma Schröder; the suffering, saint-like Genoveva is Elise. All those qualities in Elise which he had admired he now saw in magnified proportions. If anyone doubts this, let him read an entry in the diary dated September 3, 1840, where the qualities of Genoveva will be found attributed to Elise. He speaks of Elise as a spring of exhaustless love, a soul without a trace of egoism, of whom he was in no wise worthy. "Ach, wenn ich sie oft quälte, sie satanisch im Tiefsten verletzte—immer sprangen nur schöne Funken aus ihrer Seele hervor," and he felt "als ob ich einen Engel gezeißelt hätte, der sich nur dadurch rächen mag, dass er seine herrliche Natur zeigt."<sup>2</sup> Compare also *Tagebuch*, December 20, 1841, where he confesses that without Elise there would have been no Genoveva. He might also have included Emma Schröder in this statement.

We are not to suppose that Genoveva originated in his mind just at this time. The elements of the plot—the suffering of an innocent woman, the conflict between love and duty, the fundamental idea of evil's being caused by the greatest good, namely, love—all these had been in his mind for years, and can be found in such youthful productions as *Die Räuberbraut*, *Barbier Zitterlein*, and *Anna*. Particularly *Mirandola*—a fragment—seems to have been intended for the vehicle of such ideas as later were depicted in Genoveva.

In February, 1839, Hebbel read some treatment of the Genoveva subject by Müller. Werner<sup>3</sup> is doubtless right in his opinion that he may never have seen Müller's drama *Golo und Genoveva*, but only the ballads and the single scene mentioned above. However that may be, his well-known entry in the diary, February 2, 1839, expresses disapproval of the way the theme had been handled. He had not read Tieck's drama, he said, but did not expect much of it. From this entry (which we shall consider carefully, presently) it will be seen that Hebbel had already worked out the theme of his Genoveva

<sup>1</sup> Hebbel's *Werke*, I, xxx; cf. letter to Elise, July, 1840.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. letter of same date.

<sup>3</sup> Hebbel's *Werke*, I, xxxi,

with remarkable clearness. Nearly two years later (September, 1840) he read Tieck's drama. No more satisfied with this than with Müller's, he set to work to write a version in accordance with his own ideas. By March the work was done. That is, of course, not including the *Nachspiel*, which was written 1851.

Hebbel had been drastic in his criticism of Müller and Tieck. Did he justify his right to criticize by constructing a new and better drama on this almost hackneyed subject?

In a very abstract but pertinent introduction to his monograph, Meszlény sets forth the method of the real poet in approaching his material:

Strictly speaking, the dramatic material consists in the causality which portrays the relations of the people in question to one another and to the universe—all this in the abstract and freed from the limitations of time and place.

In contrast to this causal Urform, to the *theoretical* Urstoff, stands the *practical* Urstoff, which portrays the causality within the limitations of time and place.

Now it is a common error to think that a poet is *attracted* by his material, and that that is the *prima agens* of his poetic working. Just the opposite is the case. He approaches the material with personal hostility. If the thing lies before him finished, complete, it does not challenge his artistic powers. But if he sees in a material what it might be if artistically handled, he hates the form it is in. For Shakespeare the Scandinavian version of *Hamblett* was a perversion of a good tragedy. If now this Urform (practical Urstoff) be considered the thesis, the antithesis would be the abstract form which the poet deduces from the practical—the thing as it ought to be, but as yet without the limitations of time and place. The synthesis, of course, would be the completed work of art: the new practical form, with new or at least corrected limitations of time and place, fitted to the abstract formula deduced by the poet from the practical Urstoff.

This analysis of the poet's method is more than a clever conceit on the part of our critic. As an ironclad formula, as a mechanical scheme, we should discard it at once—the equation of poets cannot be rendered in any set terms. Yet its application to the work of

any author might produce interesting results. Its aptness in Hebbel's case will escape no one who is familiar with Hebbel's method of composition. It will without question be worth while to apply this scheme in some measure<sup>1</sup> to Genoveva, especially since in this way, as well as in any, we may arrive at a estimate of the play's worth. We have already had a look at the practical Urstoff, which for Hebbel consisted chiefly of the *Volksbuch* and of Tieck's dramatic poem. We shall now see how this practical Urstoff affected him—what sort of theoretical Urform it evoked—comparing at the same time his finished work with this proposed program.

Hebbel was familiar with the Genoveva *Volksbuch* from his Wesselburen days, and must have formed his conclusions as to the poetic possibilities of the material fairly early. Not until February, 1839, however, when he was reading Müller, did he express his opinion on the subject. Of Müller's work he says: "Seine Genoveva ist ein nichts. . . . Der es am wenigsten verdient, der Pfalzgraf, geht als der allein Glückliche aus der Katastrophe hervor." Thereupon follows a discussion of the subject in which Hebbel develops its possibilities as he sees them. ". . . ich habe oft über diesen Stoff nachgedacht und finde seinen dramatischen Gehalt nur im Charakter des Golo. . . . Der dramatische Dichter kann den Golo des alten *Volksbuchs* nicht brauchen, nur, wenn es ihm gelingt, diesen flammenden, heftigen Charakter uns aus menschlichen Beweggründen teuflisch handeln zu lassen, erzeugt er eine Tragödie." This condition is easily fulfilled. "Golo liebt ein schönes Weib, das seiner Hut übergeben ward, und er ist kein Werther. Darin liegt sein Unglück, seine Schuld und seine Rechtfertigung." In other words, Golo, a perfectly innocent man, becomes involved in circumstances for which he himself is not responsible, but which none the less bring him to sin and misfortune. His very love is a sin, a fact that he is the first to recognize. He feels it all too keenly, and he cannot help being angry at the object of his love. The result is, "die Harmonie seines Innern ist einmal gestört, er kann sich selbst nicht mehr achten." Then the hour comes when he confesses his love to Genoveva; after this there is no turning back. Genoveva cannot keep this secret—"ein Weib, das ein solches Geheimniss bewahren soll, steht über einer Mine, sie ist eine Blume mit

<sup>1</sup> We shall follow our own ideas in so doing. Meszlény rides his hobby too recklessly, and we do not care to follow him.

einer brennenden Kohle im Schoos." Golo must keep on now, if for no other reason than to save himself. "Dazu kommt, das eben der edelste Verführer am wenigsten an die Heiligkeit des kalten Weibes glauben kann; warum soll sie höher stehen, wie er, und, wenn sie durch irgend Einen fallen muss, warum nicht durch ihn?" One misdeed leads to another, each more terrible than the other, but each more forgivable than the preceding, because necessary. "Genovevas Schicksal muss erfüllt werden, damit Golos Hölle ganz werde; kann er nicht ganz selig seyn, so will er doch ganz verdammt seyn."

Hebbel sums up the case succinctly as follows:

Dies sind die Hauptmomente; eine ungeheure Blutthat, die aus einem holden Lächeln, einem falsch ausgelegten gütigen Blick entspringt; himmlische Schönheit, die durch sich selbst, durch ihren eigenen Glanz, ihren göttlichen Adel, in Marter und Tod stürzt. Golo wird sich seiner heimlichen, das Licht scheuenden Liebe zum ersten Mal mit Schrecken bewusst, als Genoveva von ihrem Gemahl Abschied nimmt und in dieser bangen Stunde, wo Angst und Furcht des Kommenden sie überwältigt, ihr ganzes, still-glühendes Herz mit seinem unendlichen Reichtum gegen den Scheidenden aufschliesst. Des Himmels reinster Blick entzündet die Hölle. Erschütternd und tragisch in höchster Bedeutung ist dieser verhängnisvolle Augenblick; erschütternd und tragisch in jedem Sinne und auf jedem Punkt ist das Schicksal Golos, der nicht weniger, wie Genoveva selbst, durch die Blüte seines Daseyns, durch sein edelstes Gefühl, das durch böse Fügung missgeboren in die Welt tritt, unabwendbarem Verderben als Opfer fällt. Genoveva kann und darf nicht im Vorgrund stehen; ihr Leiden ist ein rein äusserliches, und zugleich ein solches, das die tiefsten Elemente ihres Wesens, die religiösen, befruchtet und entfaltet. . . . Sie ist ein durchaus christlicher Charakter, den der Scheiterhaufen nicht verzehrt, sondern verklärt.

Hebbel claimed that it was indignation at Tieck's *Genoveva* that called forth his,<sup>1</sup> which is in a measure true. According to Meszlény's theory then, Tieck's drama should be the practical Urstoff. But after all, Müller and Tieck are only incidental; neither of them may be said to have influenced the foregoing analysis, the mature and finished nature of which points back to the *Volksbuch* of the Wesselburen days as the point of departure. In other words, Hebbel reached his conclusions on this subject early and practically independent of other dramatists. Hebbel's drama was not written until nearly two years after the program here set forth. But if we turn to his drama we find that he has followed this plan in every respect, so much so that one might take the above for a *review* of

<sup>1</sup> *Tagebuch*, September 13 and December 31, 1840.

his work by the author rather than a prospectus. It is for this reason that we have quoted so copiously: whatever we might have said in giving the theme of Hebbel's *Genoveva* would have been but a paraphrase of this entry in the diary.

In any case, it would be a work of supererogation to point out Hebbel's dramatic conception of his subject in the play: it obtrudes everywhere, so that he who runs may read.<sup>1</sup> The reader cannot doubt for a moment that Golo is the principal character, and that his struggle is one that can only lead to a tragedy. The saint-like character of *Genoveva* is made clear the first time she appears on the scene. We know at once that there will be no guilt in her case. And since Golo, even in the first act, proves to be uncompromising, thoroughgoing, and "kein Werther," we foresee an irreconcilable conflict. From this conflict the woman must come transfigured; but Golo must pay with his life for following his natural impulse.

Broadly speaking, the *Genoveva* theme is one of the eternal triangle: two men and one woman. If we review the work of the three dramatists we have considered, we see that they have treated the subject in essentially different ways. Müller spoiled the unity of his play laying stress on a character which should have been subordinate. None of his main characters stand out prominently. Golo is a weakling, Siegfried is a mere figurehead, and *Genoveva* is simply a beautiful woman—nothing more. Tieck at least makes Siegfried picturesque, a type of knighthood. Golo is a well-defined character and vies with *Genoveva* for first place in our attention. *Genoveva* is somewhat indefinite: she has human traits, but the author piles up evidence to prove that she is a saint comparable to any found in the legends of the church.

Both Müller and Tieck handled the question in the conventional way. Golo is a sinner; he is tried before the moral law, found guilty, and punished accordingly. Not so with Hebbel. His Golo must face the same moral law just as the others do. He is also found guilty, though guilty in a very different way: his guilt consists only in that he lives; for since he lives, he is subject to overpowering circumstances. In short, the fault is in the moral law, and not in the individual. Whereas Müller and Tieck must condemn this character, Hebbel justifies him.

<sup>1</sup> The poet was aware of this fault in both *Genoveva* and *Judith* and was wont to look back on them as experimental pieces.

Genoveva alone, of all Hebbel's characters, escapes these conditions. She is not of the earth earthy, but is one of those divine spirits that come forth once in a millennium, when God tries men to see if one perfect one can be found. She rises superior to the conditions of ordinary mortals, and hence her suffering, however great, is not tragic.

What of the third member of this group? In the entry in the diary quoted above Hebbel does not pass over the character of the count. He calls him guiltiest of all. Why did he not recognize the pure soul of his wife when she opened it to him, he urges, "Es ist ungleich sündlicher, das Göttliche in unserer Nähe nicht zu ahnen, es ohne weitere Untersuchung für sein schwarzes Gegentheil zu halten, als es in weltmörderischer Raserei zu zerstören, weil wir es nicht besitzen können." This point of view is unquestionably an innovation. Other writers seem to have considered the credulity of Siegfried only as added proof of the success of Golo's machinations, and his action as what one would expect of an outraged husband. There is absolutely no evidence that Müller blamed Siegfried, as the ending of the play shows. If Tieck's play ends differently it is for the glorification of Genoveva, not for the punishment of Siegfried. Hebbel alone lays emphasis on this phase.

The question naturally arises whether Hebbel justified this opinion of his when he came to write the drama. We are inclined to feel that he did not. In the first place, he was not so keen on this particular point then as when he wrote his adverse criticism of the happy ending of Müller's drama. In the next place, he became more and more taken up with the characters of Golo and Genoveva for reasons set forth above: in the summer of 1840 they were intensely real personages for him. Siegfried, on the other hand, was entirely imaginary. Thus it happens that the character of Siegfried becomes more subordinate in the author's mind. The play ends with Golo's self-imposed punishment, not with that of Siegfried, as one might have expected from the concluding words of our much-quoted entry.<sup>1</sup>

Supposing, however, that Hebbel kept his original conception of Siegfried in mind in writing his drama, it can hardly be said that he succeeded in carrying it out. It fails to be convincing. After

<sup>1</sup> "Er allein darf durch die Katastrophe gestraft werden, und er wird gestraft, denn er findet die beweinte Verstossene nur wieder, um die zermalmende Ueberzeugung zu gewinnen, dass das Band zwischen ihm und ihr für Zeit und Ewigkeit zerrissen ist."



all, what is his case against the count? The worst he can say is that he did not recognize the innate purity of his wife. Who did? Every one doubted her, though everyone had believed in her completely at first. But Genoveva had let him look into the depths of her soul, Hebbel says. This is not true. Genoveva, who loves her husband in a way, cannot bring herself to open her soul to him. Leaving the service of God reluctantly to enter upon matrimony, even the kiss due to Siegfried is but half given him, the other half is consecrated to God. Thus it has been up to the moment of separation. Then, with a foreboding of what is coming, she tries to make good her former lack of intimacy. She succeeds partially, and the count, who loves her without quite understanding her, loves her the more now. That she does not wholly succeed lies as much at her own door as at Siegfried's. Neither is so much to blame. They have been married but a short time, and the readjustment of two very different natures has not yet taken place.

Golo is a witness of the parting scene, and flatters himself that he understands Genoveva though her husband does not. He really has about as good a chance. But how far he is from knowing the woman with whom he has to deal! He thinks that she, too, should be impure because he is, and from this fallacy proceeds his undoing. Certainly he is not less guilty than Siegfried. No one can deny that Siegfried makes a mistake in condemning Genoveva. So does Othello in judging Desdemona. In both cases the circumstances are such as to try a man's soul, and who can say that the best man would not err in such a crisis. And since Hebbel shifts the matter of guilt from the individual to circumstances, why not give Siegfried advantage of this as well as Golo?

Hebbel was never satisfied with his Genoveva, and those have not been wanting who concur with him in this feeling. At the same time it must be admitted that his treatment of the theme is more truly dramatic than any other, so far. By the same token it is highly improbable that anyone else will come forward with an improvement, since Hebbel has left little to be added, at least as concerns dramatic conception of the Genoveva theme.

H. W. PUCKETT

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS